

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release
June 2, 2004

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Government Reform to Explore Government's
Role in Fighting America's Epidemic of Obesity

What: Government Reform Committee oversight hearing:
"The Supersizing of America: The Federal Government's Role in Combating Obesity and Promoting Healthy Living"

When: THURSDAY, June 3, 2004, 10:00 a.m.

Where: ROOM 2154, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

Background:

America is facing an obesity epidemic. As of the year 2000, nearly two-thirds of all Americans (64 percent) were considered overweight or obese by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).

The physical and economic costs of this "Supersized" society are astounding. Obesity will soon surpass smoking as the leading avoidable cause of death among Americans. It has been linked as a cause to several diseases that account for over two-thirds of all deaths in the United States. These diseases – which include cancer, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and illnesses associated with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder – killed more than 1.62 million Americans in 2000, according to NCHS. In economic terms, the Centers for Disease Control and RTI International completed a report in January that revealed the nation spends \$75 billion per year on obesity-related health issues, with more than half paid by taxpayers through Medicare and Medicaid.

Against this backdrop, the Federal government is reexamining many of its health and nutrition policies. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is considering changes to food nutrition labels to ensure that consumers are better informed before making

dietary choices, and the FDA recently created the Obesity Working Group (OWG) to offer recommendations on how government ought to combat obesity.

The Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Agriculture (USDA) are contemplating revisions to the U.S. Dietary Guidelines and its well-known pictorial simplification, the Food Guide Pyramid. USDA first published a food guide in 1916, and the guides have since served as the government's recommended dietary plan for all Americans. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee held its fourth of five sets of meetings from May 25-27 to determine the basis for the new dietary guidelines, which will be released in January 2005. In addition, HHS has directed the President's HealthierUS initiative to make Americans aware of the importance of being physically active and making thoughtful diet decisions. Also, the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports continues to motivate all Americans to become physically active and participate in sports. The President recently issued a proclamation designating May 2004 as National Physical Fitness and Sports month.

The Committee will examine these government initiatives with the goal of assessing their impact and whether the Federal government can, or should, do more. The Committee will also hear from leading private sector diet and nutrition experts to determine what the government can learn from their approaches and expertise.

WITNESSES

Dr. Lester M. Crawford, Acting Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration

Lynn Swann, Chair, President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

Dr. Eric Hentges, Director, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, Department of Agriculture

Dr. Arthur Agatston, Cardiologist and Author, *The South Beach Diet*

Dr. Stuart Trager, Chairman, Atkins Physicians Council

Dr. G. Harvey Anderson, Professor, Department of Nutritional Sciences, University of Toronto

Dr. Susan Finn, Chair, American Council for Fitness and Nutrition

Bruce Silverglade, Director of Legal Affairs, Center for Science in the Public Interest

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